



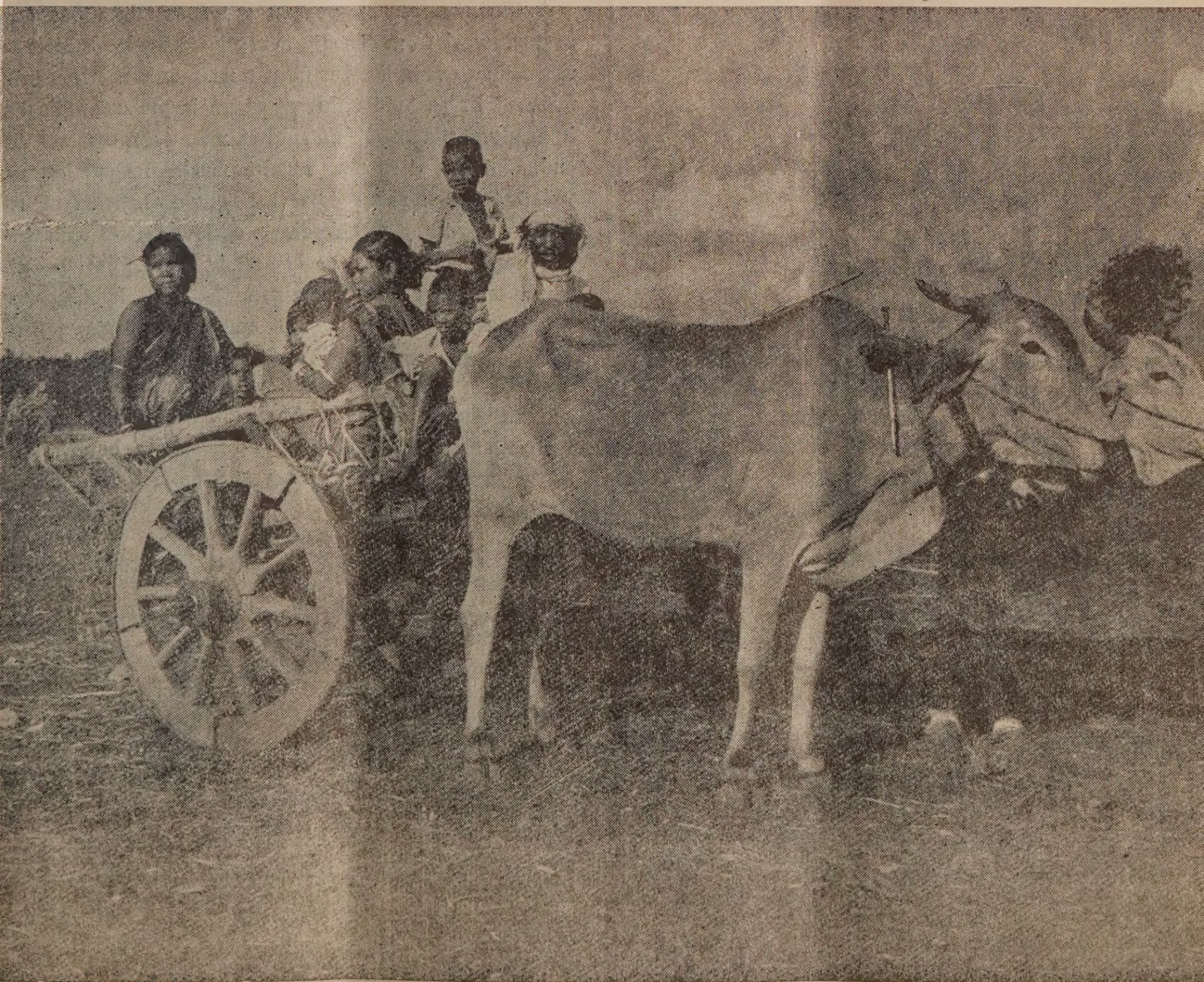
The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

MAY 1990

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CONTENTS

	Page
C.C.A. Assembly	1
Christian Jathra—A Cultural Adaptation	3
"Some Pertinent Questions"	5
The Tragedy of Sri Lanaka	7
Pentecost Message from the World Council of Churches	8
Ecumenical Testimony on Human Rights—Central America	9
Pentecost	10
Velcom in Mennonite Brethren Church	12
Course on Public Speaking and Sermon Preaching	13
Rt. Rev. K. J. Samuel, The New Bishop of East Kerala Diocese	14
News from the Dioceses	15

Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.

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MAY 1990

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25 Years Ago!

A Christian cannot separate social or educational or medical work from directly evangelistic work—Missionaries cannot evangelise but must remain only as 'humanitarians' or as 'philanthropists', their philanthropic or humanitarian activities themselves must soon come to an end, and one does not require much imagination to visualise the immense loss that would thus accrue to India. Besides, it would seem a curious sort of churlishness and unrealism to be ready to accept social, educational and healing ministrations from the Christian Missionary but to refuse the one pearl of great price which he has to offer. To the Christian, such undue importance given to social, educational and medical activities is unthinkable. After all, the Church existed for centuries without schools and hospitals, but without evangelism, it could not exist and be true to itself or to its Master.

—Churchman, 1935

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C.C.A. ASSEMBLY



Christ Our Peace

It is providential that the 9th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia—an Assembly with the theme 'Christ Our Peace : Building a Just Society'—is being held in Manila.

Churches in the Philippines have a history of speaking out on issues that affect the lives of the Philippine people. They have spoken out fearlessly against injustices and in so doing have paid a price.

Many pastors and lay people, men and women, have lost their lives upholding God's mission in the midst of great suffering.

The Christian Conference of Asia, operating in a region where societies differ in terms of religion, ethnicity and cultural heritage, is very conscious of such injustice.

With few exceptions Asian societies are authoritarian and Christians, often an insecure minority, are subjected to accusations that they are agents of foreign powers.

Given these circumstances it is not easy for CCA and its member churches to witness to the social justice dimension of the Christian gospel. This was demonstrated most clearly when the CCA was expelled from Singapore in December 1987.

MAY 1990

Nevertheless, in the spirit of the Philippine churches the Christian Conference of Asia continues to challenge unjust, oppressive and exploitative structures and also provides a vision of a future based on God's redemptive promise to Creation. This vision is of a society based on justice and peace.

What is the CCA ?

For 33 years the Christian Conference of Asia has been an organ of continuing cooperation among the Protestant churches in Asia. Since it was constituted in Prapat, Indonesia, in 1957 it has been a sign of unity and hope for the scattered churches of the Asian region. Through meetings in workshops, conferences and assemblies there has developed a community of sisters and brothers held together by a common faith.

From offices in Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and the Philippines the CCA provides creative leadership and helps the churches witness to their faith, respond to human need and work for peace and justice.

Books and reports published by the CCA promote study and action in many of the fields covered by the nine CCA programs : Urban Rural Mission, International Affairs, Women's Concerns, Mission and Evangelism, Theology, Education, Development and Service, Youth, and Communications.

The CCA's official publication, *CCA News*, provides information and news concerning activities of Christians in the region and encourages its readers to witness to God's love for all people everywhere and in every aspect of human life.

With the active participation and prayer of over 110 member councils and churches, the CCA endeavours to develop an effective Christian response to the challenges of changing Asian societies, to explore opportunities for joint action in the fulfilment of God's mission in Asia, and to encourage Asian contributions to Christian thought, worship and action throughout the world.

Praying for a Just Society

A week before the Assembly begins, Christians throughout Asia and around the world will participate in a common liturgy based on the Assembly theme. On 'Asia Sunday', May 27, they will pray for each other and their countries, addressing specific violations of justice and peace.

The liturgy, prepared by the faculty of the Tamilnadu

Theological Seminary, Madurai, India, brings praise and thanksgiving to God the 'fount of peace and ground of justice'.

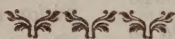
It seeks forgiveness for not challenging the powers in the world which disturb the peace of weak countries, for their vested interests and for justifying unjust structures.

Finally, it affirms the effect of people's participation in God's ministry.

The Assembly

The CCA Assembly to be held in Manila from June 4-13 will bring together around 400 people—official delegates, resource persons, consultants, stewards, fraternal delegates, visitors and guests—for an eight day period of worship, Bible studies, celebration, fellowship, policy discussions and decisions.

In addition to the election of office holders the Assembly will give a mandate for programs for the next five years.



INASMUCH

C. F. ANDREWS

In the cool Church

A stillness reigned, the beautiful light was streaming
Through the stained glass window, where our Lord in
judgement,
With a sad sorrowful face, crowned with awful justice,
Seemed to say, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?'
Behold and see, if there be any sorrow,
Like unto My sorrow.'

The sacrament was ended.
The glory of His love had been remembered.
The comfortable words—'Come unto Me,
All ye that labour and are heavy-laden,
And I will give you rest'—
Had brought us peace and joy. For a brief moment,
We had been with Him in Paradise,
'Lift up your hearts'—'Sursum Corda'—
'We lift them up unto the Lord,' we had replied.

Then again I saw them,
As I walked back from Church—
That long line, with their bodies straining, toiling,
Weary and heavy-laden.
For them, no Paradise, no heart-uplifting,
No thrill of joy in God's own beautiful creation,
No peace, no rest.

But comfortless toil, day after day—hungry, thirsty,
Ill-clad, ill-housed, ill fed,
While His sad, sorrowful face crowned with awful
justice,
Looked down on us in solemn judgment, and He said,
'Inasmuch as ye have done this to one of these—
To one of the very least of these My brethren,
Ye did it unto Me.'

Christian Jathra—A Cultural Adaptation

MODERATOR P. VICTOR PREMASAGAR

The word *Jathra*, comes from the word *Yathra*, meaning a Journey, a pilgrimage. The Indian religious heritage is full of pilgrimages—Annual festivals, for which, people journey on pilgrimage to shrines of religious centres, and offer worship. Such centres of pilgrimage are in all parts of the country, some well-known, others locally revered, and devotees throng each year in gratitude and thanksgiving to the deity, for his/her blessings during the year. There is ritual to be performed, or story of the religious centre heard through song, drama and the spoken word by the Priest or the bard, and people return home with joy that they have received the blessings of the Lord of the Temple. These jathras go back to the ancient times, and the story of the deity told each year, encourages and strengthens the worshippers as they return home with the assurance that they have met the god or goddess. Such pilgrimages to high places like Dan, Bethel and Jerusalem are recorded in the Old Testament. People journeyed to these centres, offered sacrifices and fulfilled their vows.

The early Christians in these parts in Andhra Pradesh, known as Telangana, had great attraction to these ancient pilgrimage centres. Each year, they joined with their Hindu and Tribal neighbours, and frequented these central shrines. The stories of these ancient gods attracted them. Although they believed in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, they were drawn to these places and often were guilty of not being faithful to Jesus and his Gospel. The cultural heritage and practice of the pilgrimage centres was hard to give up, without a substitute being offered by the new faith in Jesus Christ. It was Rev. E. L. Anantha Rao and his Evangelists who introduced Christian jathras in the Church, in Dudgeon first, and later in other places. It was the Indian Christian insight into the needs of new Christians that gave the Christian jathra. Rev. Anantha Rao was an outstanding leader, preacher with great commitment to the Indian heritage. The Pastorate headquarters with a central church, was made the place of annual pilgrimage. People gather in the evening with drums and singing, meet christians from other villages, in the Pastorate :

1. Procession through the village,
2. Process round the Church, signing and with drums and music. Young people sing and dance as they go round the church thrice.
3. Bullock carts of the pilgrims on which they have come, rowed up behind the devotees, and go round the church three times and the Jathra begins.
4. Lighting of the cross at the place of jathra at about 7.00 p.m., with oil lamps by women, singing special songs about the cross and the light that has shone in dark places.

'Sri Yesayya—Siluva velugu—
chenantha wachi-cherithimayya'

This is a Special Worship Service of women. They take the lead and having processed round the Cross, put their oil lamps upon the cross. The lighted cross shines through the night. People break at this point to eat their food brought from home. Some cook as they sit around their carts near a tree.

5. The jathra thanks-giving Service begins with songs and praise, at about 9.00 a.m. Welcome to special guests by all congregations. This takes place in a pendal outside the church.

The Order of Worship Service :

Song,
Call to prayer,
General Confession and Absolution,
Reading of the Lessons : O.T., Epistle and the Gospel song (sometimes special song by some village youth or women or choir party.)

The message,
The Offertory,
Thank-offering by villages,
Each village comes singing sometimes with folk dances, and the elder offers the thank-offerings already collected. Some offer special thank-offerings. Prayer for each village and congregation is offered.

As they return, each receives *Prasadam*—a gift made of coconut-sugar, mixed with ground pulses. This is the practice at a temple where the devotee, as he/she returns home, receives *Prasadam*. The Women's Fellowship prepares this, and appointed women give a spoonful to each person, as they return to their places. Many friends of other faiths come and offer their thank-offerings, and receive *Prasadam*.

Closing Prayer and benediction. This is followed by Sathkatha Kalakshepam, Burra Katha, Drama or film. These programmes go on till the dawn.

6. Next morning, after ablutions and bath, people come to the Church for worship, at about 9.00 a.m. The Holy Eucharist Service is celebrated. Adult and Infant baptisms, first cutting of hair of children, Confirmations, special songs and special offerings. The worship concludes after 1.00 p.m. or so. Hundreds of people come for Communion with great devotion and joy.

After worship service, they cook their meals, eat and journey back home in the evening.

There are singing, Bible and competitions, sharing of special experiences and meeting friends from other villages. Jathras provide a spirit of uniting for all christians in the area and they are strengthened through each other's witness.

Some Pastorates have Christmas Jathras before and after Christmas, and others Easter Jathras, soon after Easter, during the months of April and May.

Christmas Jathras

Dudgaon
Medak
Papannapet
Sangareddy (Sadasevpet)
Wadiaram

Easter Jathras

Bhanswada
Chitkul
Chowtakur
Donabanda
Dandepalli
Jannaram
Khanapur
Kallada
Luxettipet
Nirmal
Pitlam
Ramayampet
Sardhana
Siddipet
Yellareddy

The early Methodist Missionaries encouraged such cultural adaptations, songs with folk music, narrating the life, death and resurrection appearances, parables, miracles, stories from Old Testament have been written, and these were the early teaching material for the new christian. Some of the missionaries wrote songs and translated hymns into Telugu. New songs are written each year for the jathra, by some-one or other.

The Pastorate Committee and congregational committees meet well in advance to make preparations for the jathra, print invitations with date, time, place and the names of special Preachers and visitors, and distribute in all congregations. These are often shared with their friends of other faiths and they also give their thank-offering, and often come and participate in the jathra Service. Village young people prepare dramas, folk dances and practise special songs for the jathra. As they come from their village, they come singing with special banners with scripture texts and with village bands and special music prepared well in advance for many weeks. Generally full-moon weeks are chosen for jathras.

As they return, they go back discussing about messages they have heard, sing the new songs they learnt, their meeting of friends from other villages and rejoicing that the Lord has made it possible for them to attend the jathra this year. Some make special vows like Hanna of old and return with great faith and hope.

Jathras are also celebrated in Arnakonda and other places in Karimnagar diocese.

They provide cultural ethos for worship, thanks-giving, celebrations of faith and witness to neighbours of other faiths in every pastorate. This could be noted as one of the outstanding examples of making Christian faith culturally grounded and rooted within the Indian soil.

Siluvagutta jathra :

Seven village Christian congregations in Sadasevpet pastorate, celebrate each year, a jathra on the top of a hill near Gangaram village, from January 24-26-25th being St. Paul's Conversion Day. They planted a granite cross on the top of the hill and go on pilgrimage there each year.

This was done through the leadership and inspiration of the Rev. P. Sathyanandam, a senior Pastor in the diocese. The leaders of the congregations meet and plan for the jathra, with the help of the Pastor and the Pastorate Committee. They have written a jathra song comparing their seven congregations, with the seven

congregations in the book of Revelations. On 24th night, seven congregations go in a procession through their villages and then come to the top of the hill. Gangaram has a spectacular procession with standard a long row of decorated bullock carts, Christians singing in procession through village, reciting Bible verses at every stop on the way, with drums and dancing.

All the seven congregations meet on the hill top around mid-night, process on the top of the hill, plant the standards brought from villages, near the cross, and begin the Worship Service.

There will be singing, prayer, Order of evening worship and closes with benediction. There are dramas, Sathakathakalakshepam, Burra kathas and film each night till the day break. They return to their homes in the morning and come up the hill around mid-day for Holy Eucharist Service. Then adult and infant baptisms, Confirmations, special thankofferings will take place at this Service. It goes on till about 4.00 p.m. People go to their homes and come back around 9.00 p.m. They have a special Worship Service, and after that cultural programmes till day break. The next day they have a closing worship service around mid-day, and return in the evening.

Men, women and children, peoples of other faiths and tribals participate in the jathra. They have song competitions, special programmes for children, youth, women and men. Special Bible Study classes meet before the mid-day Service. People come with great joy and participate in the three-day programmes.

Last year they have brought electricity to the hill top, by applying to the department. They have plans to develop the hill top as a Meditation Centre in the coming years. This is yet another cultural adaptation suited to the religious heritage of our people.

Luxettipet, north of the diocese, in Adilabad district, the local church planted a huge Cross on the top of a hill, and have Easter Day Early Morning Worship Service. People from villages congregate from about 3.00 a.m. The number is increasing each year.

Central Services :

There are special meetings arranged during the Lent, as central services for ten to twelve village congregations under a mango grove with a well. The Christians gather around midday, and the Lenten Service with celebration of Holy Communion goes on till about 5 p.m., and they return home. These are attended with great devotion and people sing songs, have Confirmation Service and engage in Bible Study and meditation under the shade of a mango grove during the time of the hot midday sun.

This is another Service widely attended by most people in the area. This again is culturally so natural for people to meet under trees in celebration of festivals. The Lenten meditation attract hundreds of people, men and women. There will be time for fellowship and exchange of experience.

Jathras in Central Churches, on hill tops and Central Services provide culturally natural worship atmosphere for village Christians. In the Indian religious tradition, each pilgrimage centre has a *Sthalapurana* story of God's acts in the place, and these provide the inspiration to journey on pilgrimage. The christian congregations meet in central places and on hill tops around the story of Christmas and Easter. As these places are frequented each year, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith becomes rooted in the soil and are culturally owned and affirmed by our people.

'Some Pertinent Questions'

YOUNG PRESBYTERS CONSIDER PHENOMENA OF POPULAR RELIGION

REV. DAVID C. GALLUP, *Madras*

What attracts CSI members to fundamentalism and Pentecostalism?

How do we minister to parishioners for whom demons, evil spirits, spells and sorcery are very real experiences?

If a healing ministry is a gift of the Holy Spirit, why are we so suspicious of some of the healers?

These were some of the questions discussed by twenty young pastors of Madras Diocese during an intensive two-day conference held at Dhyana Ashram, San Thome, March 27th and 28th. Helping to focus these questions was the recent, CLS publication, *Religion and Power*, by Lionel Caplan* which had been distributed to all the participants in advance. Caplan's book consists of a collection of papers resulting from his socio-anthropological studies of three Madras city churches, two Tamil and one English-speaking. The essays provide helpful insights into the dynamics at work in the Madras Protestant community.

Reviewing the history of the Protestant Church in South India, Caplan reminds us that the practice of 'polity' arrangements by the denominational mission boards led to a genial disregard for denominational divisions. As Christians became mobile and emigrated to other areas in the South they could not expect to find the same denominational churches they had known at home; they were happy simply to find a church. That continuing disregard for denominational niceties, which contributed to the amalgamation of the CSI, partly explains the ease with which church members move back and forth between the CSI 'home church' and pentecostal-type congregations and prayer-groups.

More significant, though, is the claim of such church members that the charismatic groups minister to their needs in ways that their main line church seems to fail to do, through warm, caring fellowship, 'Biblical preaching' of a type not encouraged in CSI pulpits, and portentous manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit, particularly through glossolalia and healing.

Further, as is true with fundamentalism in faiths the world over, simplistic answers and a strong sense of certainty appeal to people frustrated and worried by the ethical, economic, political and social ambiguities of daily life. This is true of affluent and poor alike.

That these types of ministries seem all too easily to lend themselves to quackery and commercialization does

not alter the fact that an experience of acceptance and healing is sought and found in such groups. The fact is admitted by pastors and laypeople concerned about a holistic gospel faith, and whose concern leads them to question the sometimes unbalanced, limited and divisive tendencies of this popular religiosity. They see it leading to exclusive claims about a particular kind of spirituality. For example, if you cannot speak in tongues, or pray with tears, or shake and chant in a certain way, you may be accused of resisting the Spirit. This can lead to a not-so-subtle manipulation or spiritual blackmail.

How should the CSI minister to people caught up in these enthusiasms? Crude condemnation will not do. We need to understand the phenomena and the spiritual needs that they are meant to satisfy. Sympathetic understanding can lead to more effective teaching and counselling. Pastoral ministry must include much more teaching and less rhetorical exhortation from the pulpit. The teaching may more effectively be done in small groups studying in someone's home. For example: some very relevant church history recalling how the Reformation came about partly as a result of Luther's condemnation of Tetzels selling of indulgences, would help us to understand the spiritual and ethical perversity of the claims of any person or organization to be able to pray for the benefit of those who pay enough money.

Absolutely basic must be the Reformation/Protestant recovery of the New Testament teaching regarding the priesthood of all believers. We have a strong propensity towards hero-worship, personality-cults, and reverence for gurus and spiritual leaders. In politics it is manifested when hysterical party-members immolate themselves when their leader's prestige is threatened or when the leader dies. It shows itself also in the propensity to attach oneself to a charismatic preacher, healer or 'prayer-warrior' who claims to have, or is attributed with, special access to the grace and power of God.

This dependence upon a mediator between God and ordinary humans can lead to the ambivalent attitude toward Presbyters. On the one hand, great deference is shown toward that man or woman of God who by ordination is set aside for a priestly, mediatorial, even pontifical role. On the other hand, that same Presbyterian is often derided as being all-too-human in financial affairs and church politics! Consequently, aside from his or her sacerdotal role, the Presbyterian enjoys very little credibility.

On yet another level of popular spirituality, there is a felt need for spiritual helpers and agents of power to cope with evil spirits, demon-possession, sorcery and all sorts of mischief and malignancy experienced in daily life. Consequently, there is a kind of pentecostalist undercurrent in our churches, as members gather in house prayer

* Caplan, Lionel: *Religion and Power*, CLS Madras, 1989. Rs. 30/-.

groups to minister to each other and to be helped by the latest person discovered to have a gift for 'preaching with power' or 'healing by the Holy Spirit'. This is an area of spirituality seldom touched upon in any formal pastoral training in our seminaries. If a pastor is called upon to exercise an evil spirit or to pray for healing or for success in an examination, he or she must draw upon a reserve of popular knowledge and practices preserved, promulgated and perhaps sometimes invented by the laity. That these practices are commonly understood to be 'Biblical' and are at the same time hardly distinguishable from popular Hindu practices, raises interesting questions. Some of these questions are:

(1) How are we to relate the Judeo-Christian demand for personal responsibility to the popular presumption that many, if not most, of our troubles are not of our own making but are visited upon us by outside agents, such as human mischief-makers or *pei pissassu*?

(2) How are we to minister to people who live in fear of evil spirits when many of us have been taught consciously or unconsciously to dismiss such fears as superstitions or problems to be dealt with by psychiatry?

(3) What are we to make of the conclusion that actual religious experiences as well as perceptions are shaped by the culture in which we live? Why do some people experience demons, sorcery, etc., while others simply do not find them to be a part of their world? If spiritual experiences are culturally molded, how do we understand and apply Scripture and the Gospel in different places and times with people who have such differing experiences?

A further area of concern is suggested by Caplan's analysis. That is that there may be a theological dichotomy within the CSI between a fundamentalist majority and a social-gospel (and often elite) minority. Caplan tends to present this in terms of class differences and (subtle) conflict. But his class analysis fails at this point because the theological differences do not parallel class differences. All havenots are not fundamentalists; many of the elite and relatively powerful are. But, the theological dichotomy is real in the division of ministry between the official ecclesiastical agents (Bishop, Presbyter and Deacons) and the unofficial and sometimes ignored or derided ministry of lay helpers and house prayer groups. It is a difference or dichotomy between the programmes of the Synod and the dioceses and the agendas of the people.

That lay people are ministering to each other, may be seen as a good thing. We Protestants, claiming the priesthood of all believers, supposedly recognize the various talents and spiritual gifts to be used to strengthen and help each other. A warm, accepting and concerned group praying for its members and neighbours and acting practically to help, is a good expression of Christian love. We should consciously perpetuate that tradition as a way of combatting sacerdotal pretension among the clergy

and also as a way of combatting the spiritual pretensions of lay charismatics. We should beware of anyone, clerical or lay, who claims to have special access to God through prayer, or a special fund of merit (sometimes dispensed only to those who can pay the money).

Further, that 'popular spirituality' can sometimes be irresponsible and self-centred is a serious matter. Looking for outside agents and avoiding the question, 'Lord, is it I?' is a tempting way to avoid the challenge of God to change oneself and the circumstances surrounding one. Still, if the 'social gospel' which seems to be the party line of the CSI hierarchy is being rejected in favour of a fundamentalist personal piety, we must ask whether there has been too much rhetoric, too much hypocrisy, and too little real application of a prophetic, transforming gospel in the CSI.

Is there any prescription for our condition?

It may seem very tame to prescribe more 'Bible-study'. Nevertheless, that is certainly part of the process. But it must be study informed by an adequate theology and by an awareness of history ancient and recent. Theology is not an esoteric subject of experts in musty libraries. While we 'search the scriptures' we must be aware of doctrinal implications. We in the united Church of South India may like to think that such matters are beneath our dignity and are archaic shiboleths to be decried. But must we condemn ourselves to repeat errors of the past simply because we are too proud or too lazy to learn from the past? It may seem a pity, but it also seems a necessity, for each generation to have to go through a theological discipline in order to make the Gospel its own. Particularly crucial matters for our time are the nature of the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit. The VELCOM Bible studies indirectly address these topics at several points and could serve as good starting points or the kind of study we need.

Another area of study which must be pursued is the phenomenon of popular spirituality and the means of pastoral ministry to and Christian counselling of people who experience demons, evil spirits and sorcery as very real. This is no remote village phenomenon. If you want to start a lively, almost tumultuous conversation in which everyone is eager to contribute, just ask about *pei piasu*! You will have touched a real live nerve of curiosity, confusion and anxiety. These phenomena have been studied and more study must be done to try to understand what is happening. What are the cultural factors at work, how do we interpret our Scriptures in which demon-possession is taken for granted, how can we apply modern tools of psychology and sociology as well as traditional tools of prayer?

We have a pressing duty to minister effectively and counter the manipulations of spiritual charlatans as we as the errors of sincere seekers and believers.

The Tragedy of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka which had been known as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean has now come to be described as the Tear Drop of the Indian Ocean. The constant wars over the centuries between the Sinhalese and Tamils for dominance over the island came to an end around the 10th century A.D. with the formation of two separate Kingdoms, a Sinhalese Kingdom in the South and a Tamil Kingdom in the North. This relative peace came to an end with the arrival of Portugal as a colonial power in the 15th century followed by the Dutch in the 17th century and the British by the end of the 18th century. The 450 years of colonial rule brought about a superficial unification of the country which came to an end with the advent of independence in 1948. The modern tragedy of Sri Lanka dates back to the years immediately after independence. The government began a series of discriminatory measures against the Tamils in the Estate areas about 1.2 million in number. These enjoyed Ceylon citizenship during the British period and had eight representatives in a Parliament of 66 members. The denial of citizenship and the deprivation of representation in Parliament resulted in further aggravating the economic disabilities of the most oppressed group in Sri Lanka.

This was followed by the Sinhala only bill depriving the Tamil language the parity of status promised prior to independence. The Tamils from the days of the Tamil Kingdom prior to the Portuguese colonial era had occupied the region now known as the Northern and Eastern Province and considered it their territorial homeland. The Sri Lankan government despite opposition by the Tamils carried out government colonisation of the Tamil provinces with Sinhala colonists radically changing the demography of the Tamil homeland. Other discriminatory steps followed with discrimination in recruitment to the government service, the police and armed services. The most glaring discrimination was in admission to universities. The criterion of merit was abandoned and a system of standardisation was introduced discriminating against Tamil students. For example, a Sinhalese student with an average of 50 marks would be admitted whereas a Tamil student with an average of 60 or 62 marks would be rejected. The use of development aid was yet another form of discrimination. For the last 15 years not even one per cent of the foreign aid for development has been used in the Northern or Eastern Provinces.

These discriminatory measures led to the Tamils' demand for a federal form of government and later to the demand for a separate state. This Sinhala Government response to these demands of the Tamils was first mob-violence. In 1958, 1977 and then 1983 there were the well known holocausts against the Tamils. Mobs raided Tamil houses, shops and property and looted, burned and destroyed with impunity. Thousands of innocent Tamils were killed and many thousands driven out of their homes as refugees. After the 1983 holocaust more than 400,000 became refugees. The Tamil militant movement was a response to the government's persistent refusal to grant the legitimate demands of the Tamils and the increasing violence unleashed in the Tamils, now not just by the Sinhalese mobs but by the government's Sinhalese army. The conflict between the government and the Tamil militant groups resulted in further devastation of the Tamil areas culminating in the invitation of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in July 1987 and the signing of the

so-called accord between the Sri Lankan President and the Prime Minister of India. Far from 'peace keeping' the Indian army began a brutal military operation against the LTTE (Tigers) and during an offensive that lasted over two years, killed more than 6000 innocent Tamil civilians. The operation achieved nothing except for the tragedy of the thousands of lives lost and the colossal damage to Tamil property. The new President of Sri Lanka called for the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces and has simultaneously begun talks with the LTTE. Apparently the Tamil group believes the government will concede its basic demands: (1) the integrity of the Tamil homeland consisting of the Northern and Eastern Provinces; (2) devolution of power to a Tamil Provincial government as an acceptable alternative to a separate state and (3) the recognition and use of Tamil as an official language. At present there is an uneasy quiet. The Tamils wonder whether Sinhalese governments which on three previous occasions made agreements on such a basis and went back on them, will this time be able to enter into an agreement which they will honour.

In 1971 the Sinhala speaking rural youth (of the majority community) challenged the government at that time to effectively share power and economic resources. This was brutally crushed resulting in the death of 10,000-15,000 youth. This group calling itself the JVP has violently protested against 'the accord' on the Tamil question, the presence of the Indian army and called in question the legitimacy of the government itself. The above was based on the argument that the presence of a foreign power undermined the sovereignty of the nation. This analysis was accepted by most people in the country. It is recognized by many as representing the aspirations of the poorer sections of the Sinhalese masses. A group that has been frustrated about using the democratic processes to gain political power. The government's response to this movement in the South was almost a full repetition of its earlier military operation against the Tamils in the North. Reprisals in the form of mass killings, summary executions, mass arrests, disappearances have become the order of the day. For many months it was reckoned that an average of 100 people were killed a day. It is reckoned that more than seven thousand are being held as political prisoners. All protest has been silenced because of the reign of terror. Even human rights lawyers have been abducted and killed.

Both in the Tamil North and East and in the Sinhalese South of the country there can be heard cries and groanings of death. The world church can at least take a few immediate steps to help.

1. To send a pastoral team to visit Sri Lanka and study and report on the situation. The team can meet with church leaders and church members and others with a view to strengthening their efforts to find a peaceful solution.
2. To provide relief and rehabilitation assistance for the continuing tide of refugees.
3. To highlight the human rights violations in the country and help in having the political prisoners released.
4. Assistance in disseminating information about the situation in Sri Lanka.

*Sri Lanka Participants
at the JPIC Convocation, Seoul Korea,*

Pentecost Message from the World Council of Churches

[Pentecost this year comes on 3 June. This message is from the presidents of the World Council of Churches—Nita Barrow (Methodist, Barbados), Lois Wilson (United, Canada), Johannes Hempel (Lutheran, DDR), Walter Makulu (Anglican, Botswana), Marga Bührig (Reformed, Switzerland), Ignatios of Antioch (Eastern Orthodox, Syria), and Paulos Gregorios (Oriental Orthodox, India)]

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ :

Pentecost is a special celebration this year as the churches of all the traditions—Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant—celebrate the festival on the same day. 'In that day', said Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, 'you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you' (John 14:25). In the Spirit we participate in the very life of the Trinity. God's love has communicated itself through the Spirit to us human beings. The Spirit transforms our human freedom into active love, communicating through us the love of God to all creatures.

The experience of the presence and action of the Spirit is not something extraordinary; we perceive in particular moments the supernatural dimension of the natural, the spiritual significance of ordinary events. In the struggle for justice, in the search for friendship, in each manifestation of human kindness towards fellow human beings in the stilled tranquillity that follows prayer, in all that shatters our stony hearts and makes us aware of the beauty and mystery of life, we experience the action of the Spirit, making us sensitive to the overwhelming tenderness of God.

The Spirit works not only in the intimacy of our own hearts but also calls all humanity and the whole cosmos out of death to new possibilities through the power of the risen Christ. The Spirit is at work in the search for justice for the little ones, for the poor of the earth, for those with broken hearts. The Spirit inspires all those who work for peace, to announce the liberating power of God.

The wind of the Spirit is blowing today, in us, in our churches, and in historical events where barriers are falling down and where there are possibilities of new beginnings. With the people of Namibia we celebrate their independence; with the people of Chile their democracy; with the people of Central and Eastern Europe their newly-acquired freedom. Glory be to God whose gift of dignity is affirmed through the recovery of freedom by these peoples and who opens in these events new avenues for the service and testimony which the Church renders to Christ in the Spirit.

But the Spirit also suffers. The dove of peace appears in many parts of the earth covered with blood. We grieve

over the situation in the Middle East. Jerusalem, the City of Peace, where the Holy Spirit manifested itself powerfully in the winds and flames of Pentecost: that city, centre of admiration and love of the three main monotheistic religions of the world, does not know its own peace. The Intifada reminds us that the promises of peace in justice are not yet real; that we pray for the Spirit to come, so that prejudices and hate will disappear and a new day of peace and understanding may reign.

We will be praying together with the Church universal, 'Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation', as we look toward the Assembly of the World Council of Churches next year in Canberra, Australia. We pray that the Spirit may call the Church to a bold testimony of God's liberating action in history. 'Come, Holy Spirit'. In the hope of a response to our prayer we greet you in Jesus Christ. [EPS]

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Ecumenical Testimony on Human Rights—Central America

[This is from material presented to the 46th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (Geneva, 29 January-9 March) by the World Council of Churches.]

In 1989, Guatemala experienced an alarming rise in political violence. Of all the groups which were targeted for violence, none have been as harshly brutalized as the indigenous people who constitute the majority of the population. Bombings, death-squad-style murders and disappearances increased to such an extent that people began to speak fearfully of a return to the worst years of the early 1980s.

Armed struggle has increased in the past year. In the face of efforts of many to seek peace through the National Dialogue, human rights groups, campesinos, trade unionists, and students have been terrorized by political violence for which the government's military and security forces are largely responsible.

During September and October 1989, 93 people were victims of extra-judicial execution and 107 people were made to disappear; more than triple the number in the first half of the year. By the end of 1989, CIEPRODH (Centre for Research, Study and Promotion of Human Rights) had documented 1300 assassinations. Along with deeply unjust land tenure system and economy, these massive abuses of human rights make efforts at dialogue towards peace, justice and true democracy all but impossible.

During . . . 1989, church and humanitarian institutions and their personnel [in El Salvador] suffered severe attacks, direct threats and intimidation for their work among the . . . population.

When the church historically had behaved as the biblical Levite, walking by indifferent to the suffering of his brothers, it had enjoyed the protection and privileges of

the state. However, when it stopped and saw the long history of injustice and began denouncing it, it became the target of persecution, living in its own flesh imprisonment, torture and even death.

Many religious workers in recent months have become victims of the repression carried out by the Armed Forces which have attempted to crush the social and pastoral work of the churches. It intensified after the major offensive by the Farabundo Marti Front of National Liberation . . . launched on 11 November 1989, after which much of the military's wrath was directed against the churches, accusing them of being front organizations for the FMLN . . .

Reports have been received from churches in El Salvador this year concerning the repression not only of the churches, but also of human rights bodies, women's associations, labour unions, the academic community, and popular organizations. World Council of Churches delegations, and visits by many of its member churches, such as those from Canada, confirm that in the past year there has been an alarming increase of repression against the civilian population—and especially the peasant population, with a marked focus of harassment of popular organizations and the abuse of their members.

. . . In the light of the sharp increase in human rights abuses which has taken place during the year in El Salvador, the WCC calls upon the commission to denounce the abusive activities of the Armed Forces and paramilitary groups in El Salvador, particularly the indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and the persecution of church, human rights, and humanitarian organizations. The commission is urged to renew the mandate of the UN special representative on El Salvador, so as to ensure continued monitoring of the situation throughout the coming year. [EPS]

PENTECOST

Prepared by

REV. DR. EMMANUEL E. JAMES, M.A., B.D., S.T.M., Ph.D., Bangalore

Bible Passages : Joel 2 : 28-32 ; Acts 2 : 1-12 ; John 14 : 15-26.

The day of Pentecost is a very important day in the life of the Christian Church. Pentecost literally means Fiftieth, because it was observed 50 days after the Passover by the people of Israel. Pentecost was in fact the Harvest Festival. In the Old Testament, it is also known as the feast of the Weeks. In the New Testament it is known as the birthday of the Church. Pentecost is the day of 'Descent of the Holy Spirit'. The Spirit of God was very active in the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. Therefore, the book of the Acts of the Apostles is also known as the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The second chapter of Acts describes the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came and descended on the disciples and followers of Jesus who had gathered in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit was promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Day of Pentecost is also known as 'Whitsunday'. Whitsunday means *White* Sunday because it was the custom for persons who received baptism on that day to be dressed in white baptismal robes.

1. Is this the first time that the Spirit of God came to this earth ?

- (a) The Holy Spirit is not new to this world or to humanity. In Gen. 1 : 2, we read, 'And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters'. Later on in the book of Judges (13-16 chapters) we read that the Spirit of God was active in the life of Samson. There are several other instances in the Old Testament where we see the Spirit of God who was active in the life of men of God.

One of the classical passages in the Old Testament is in the book of Joel 2 : 28-32. While preaching on the day of Pentecost, Peter refers to this passage (Acts 2 : 16-21).

- (b) In the New Testament we see that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus soon after His baptism in Jordan (Matt. 3 : 13-17).

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues of fire that separated and came and rested on each one who were present.

Christians have been asking over the years, 'Did the Holy Spirit come fully on the day of Pentecost ?' This is based on the fact of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2 : 17), 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people'. However, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on 120 people who had gathered in one place (Acts 2 : 1). Therefore, it is believed that the Lord will pour out the Holy Spirit in the latter days, which could be our times.

2. Tower of Babel and Speaking in Tongues

- (a) In the book of Genesis, we read that the people spoke only one language till the time they built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11 : 1). However, because of man's pride, God confused their language. In other words, the Tower of Babel is a symbol of human pride and rebellion.

Language is a means of communication between human beings. It can be a blessing to communicate with each other if we know the language. But because of man's pride and rebellion, there has been confusion and lack of communication. Moreover, difference in language has brought about disunity, distrust, hatred and jealousy between people. Difference in language has also resulted in dirty politics. This is a sad state of affairs.

- (b) When the Holy Spirit came upon the people who had gathered in Jerusalem, it is recorded that they began to speak in different tongues, 'As the Spirit enabled them' (Acts 2 : 4). Many people have asked whether this situation can be compared to the situation at the Tower of Babel. We can find the answer for this in Acts 2 : 6-11 and Genes 11 : 7, i.e., during the building of Tower of Babel the people were speaking one language. Later they could not understand each other's language. However, on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them, people heard the followers of Jesus speaking in their own language and understood what they were saying. When they were speaking in tongues, everybody understood each other because this is God's act. The true unity of humanity is made known in Jesus Christ. This was confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when they spoke, everybody heard and understood. If

we study Acts 2:8-12, we find that there were 17 groups of people and all of them were able to understand what the followers of Jesus were saying.

This means that when we are humble and obedient before God, and wait upon God in prayer and devotion, there will be oneness of Spirit, Unity and Understanding, and we understand each other because we speak the language of God. And the language of God is love. However, if we are proud, disobedient and rebellious, we misunderstand each other, we hate each other, we become angry with each other, and hence we do not understand each other.

Language can be 'Divider' as well as 'Uniter'. Language is a special Gift of God to Mankind. Let us use the language that God has given to us for His glory in praise and thanksgiving.

3. Is the Holy Spirit available to us today?

The answer is Yes. Jesus Himself has promised in Luke 11:13, 'If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him'. If we want the Holy Spirit today, we have to ask God for it in the spirit of humility and devotion. We cannot buy the Holy Spirit because He is not for sale.

Some people have offered money to buy the Holy Spirit right from the first century A.D. e.g., Simon, the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-25). In Acts 8:18 and 19, we see that when Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying of hands by the Apostles, he offered them money and said, 'Give me also this ability...'. However, Peter scolded him very strongly as we see in Acts 8:20-23. Therefore, we have to repent for our sins and pray to the Lord to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is available to all. He is the Gift of God to all people. There are many symbols for the Holy Spirit and one of them is the Wind. Just as we open the doors and windows of our homes, to have fresh air, we also should open the doors and windows of our hearts and lives, so that the fresh air of the Holy Spirit can blow in our hearts and lives. However, just as we cannot live in a house where windows and doors are always closed, because of the bad smell, similarly, the hearts and lives closed to the Spirit of God are useless. Only when God breathes into us, that we can become living souls (Gen. 2:7).

Conclusion

Today we can depend upon the Holy Spirit's guidance, Counsel and Power. We need to be instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit for Wisdom, Power and Love. Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? (Acts 19:2).

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Velcom in Mennonite Brethren Church

It is a matter of great pleasure that VELCOM is being welcomed by other denominations. Not at all surprising when one looks at what makes Velcom tick. Rev. Dass Babu, the Director of the C.S.I. Communications, was invited by the Mennonite Brethren Church in Andhra Pradesh to explain the concept of Velcom at a large gathering in Shamshabad from 17th to 20th May, 1990. With the help of slides and posters, the Director explained the Four Stages of Velcom.

First of all VELCOM, —the vision for Equipping the local congregation, is a happy switch right back to the first Church, when the disciples regarded each tiny church as a close-knit family. It is this spirit, this fellow-feeling that is the life and soul of Velcom which was initiated by Bishop P. Victor Premasagar, the Moderator of the Church of South India.

In the Vision the picturesque Agape has been brought back. How happily it must have been, all tucking into the newly-found spiritual fare ! It was love in action. There is nothing like a good meal for breaking down all bars : the high and the low, rich and poor, the wise and the otherwise, the clergy and the laity, are one and the same at the table. Velcom would have one meal for the entire congregation, usually after the Holy Eucharist.

After a hearty meal, the entire local congregation prayerfully get down to Agenda. What are the burning problems ? Any backlog to be cleared ? This is only the beginning, but even this is to be done in a truly democratic way, where any member can voice his opinion. After this, the more serious part of work namely Analysis follows. Clearly a sensitive affair, for it seeks to get down to the root of each and every trouble. That means a good deal of heat ; a little understanding would clear the air. Having traced down the origins of troubles, the congregation set to work to find out the ways and means to attack the troubles. First of all, they look for the local resources : personnel, skills, funds etc. that exist within the local congregation. Only when they are found wanting, will they think of tapping outside resources.

The last plank of Velcom is the most important : Action. Velcom is an action-oriented scheme. It would have the congregation plunge into action, with whatever resources and personnel available. Each member must learn to care for those that need doing : the sick, the old

the destitute, the hopeless, the poor, etc. Each person must learn to share not only the material comforts such as food, shelter, clothing but other things as knowledge, talent expertise etc. Serving goes with caring and sharing. So much more love and goodwill is shown, the bond of fellowship strengthened a million times when one finds time to teach others a useful skill, art or anything that helps earn their daily bread. Velcom would have the congregation pray tirelessly. More troubles are solved, more arguments settled, more doubts laid to rest through Prayer.

Such being the merits of the Velcom Rev. Dr. Arnold, the President of the Mennonite Brethren Church in A.P. has invited Rev. Dass Babu, the Director of the C.S.I. Communications to explain the concept of Velcom. A gathering of 40 mostly observers, critics and writers, who came to hear with open mind, left perfectly convinced of the need for Velcom in their own Church. So much so that about 200 local congregation members sat down to Agape ! And what's more they were so fired by enthusiasm that they decided to give it a try there and then on the spot. After Agape they settled down to Agenda, the second plank of Velcom, picking out burning problems and digging up the backlog. Then they proceeded to the third stage namely Analysis. Matters, as might be expected, did not move as fast as in the first two stages. Happily, a spot of understanding helped them along and in as little as 40 minutes all the members were at on each and every explosive issue. It must be remembered that they heard about this Velcom for the first time and the fire that set them off, after listening to the Director, died not one bit down as they went through the first 3 stages. Now they were all set for action. The brethren split into various bands and went about, discussing how best they could take Velcom to their churches.

Rev. Dr. Arnold, the President of M.B. Church readily offered valuable financial help, while Mr. Prabhudas and Rev. Solomon mobilised the local resources. The first experiment of Velcom in the M.B. Church was a complete success. The church was so impressed by the novelty and utility of the concept of Velcom. The brain-child of the Moderator Victor Premasagar, it is a matter of great pleasure that it is growing from strength to strength.

—D.B.

Course on Public Speaking and Sermon Preaching

One of the best known get away from all spots in the greenest state of India, Kerala, has been picked to focus on the most important facets of the pulpit—the sermon preaching—and the platform—the public speaking.

Thanks to Rt. Rev. M. C. Mani, the Bishop of Madhya Kerala and Rev. M. T. Tharian, the Secretary of the diocese, for having invited the Department of Communications, to organise the short course in Kottayam from 26th to 30th of March 1990. The course was conducted with the financial help received from the Council for World Mission.

Gone are the days when the pulpit was considered a straight jacket means, to be deprived for ever from the rich and varied resources that lie elsewhere. How many souls might have been stirred, how many souls might have been won, if only the sermon could have done with the ways and means that are stock-in-trade of elocution or public speaking !

In our country, where more than ninty-five per cent are other than Christians, the Church would lose rather than gain, if sermons are delivered the way they are—a situation that cannot be afforded to let slide. The Communications Department organised a five day crash course on *Public Speaking and Sermon Preaching* for the Kerala region in Kottayam.

The course got off a flying start with Prof. George Koshy's (the C.S.I. General Secretary) brilliant Inaugural Speech. Among other points made by him, the following need special mention :

- How one says it is more important than what he says.
- Public speaking is not an impossible thing provided one overcomes the initial nervousness.
- Be brief

- Address properly, the chairperson and people.
- Open with a story or an anecdote.
- Develop vocabulary by reading books and magazines.

Each day began with devotions conducted by Rev. M.T. Tharian and Rev. C. T. Kurian. Rev. Tharian was all praise for the current pulpit performance, but he pointed out the glaring mistakes. No preacher should take the congregation for granted nor must he focus on one section of the pews. His words, 'A preacher sometimes tries to hit the target in public without having learnt how to shoot straight,' will find many who would agree. He was happy that such a useful course was designed.

Rev. C. T. Kurian who shared with Rev. Tharian the task of morning devotions, called for more spiritual depth and theological insights in the sermons.

Mr. Alex, manager of the C.M.S. Industrial School kindly provided the boarding facilities to all the delegates.

Rev. Dass Babu, the Director, who conducted the course, spoke on the dynamics of public speaking. Some of the topics :

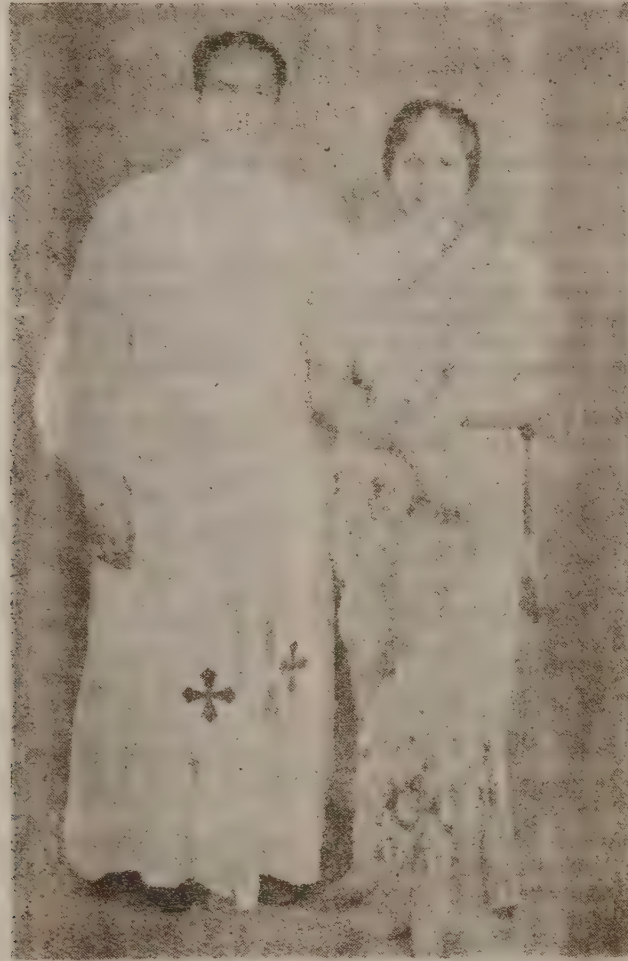
- Study and preparation
- Content, Listener, Words and Effect
- Voice modulations ; Gestures
- Right language and style

were dealt with, with the help of audio-visual aids.

Rev. Tharian, cheerful as always, did his best to keep the delegates quite at home. It is incredible he could make such elaborate arrangements with such meticulous precision.

DASS BABU

Rt. Revd. K. J. Samuel, The New Bishop of East Kerala Diocese



BISHOP K. J. SAMUEL AND HIS WIFE ALEYAMMA

The famous saying, 'The end crowns the work', has come true for Rt. Revd. K. J. Samuel, who has recently been consecrated Bishop of the Diocese of East Kerala on the 5th March 1990 by the Most Revd. Dr. P. Victor Premasagar, the Moderator.

Born in 1942 in a humble village family, Bishop had a chance of studying in the States. He received M.Div. from the Texas Christian University. He also received the Certificate in Pastoral Studies from Selly Oak, Birmingham, U.K. After his studies the Bishop served the diocese in various capacities, including as the Clergy Secretary of the diocese.

Very few know about his ministry in Parkal, a remote region in the diocese of undivided Dornakal, (now, Karimnagar). The Bishop cheerfully offered to be sent as a missionary. For over a decade this soft-spoken, learned and understanding pastor laboured there. He brought the gospel and light to the people. Gentle, sweet-tempered, he gave the best part of his life for the uplift

of the down-trodden. He taught them many trades and set up projects that could help the folks to stand on their own feet. Parkal, to this day, remains the monumental vineyard in which the Bishop laboured.

Happily, he has been blessed with an understanding and supporting life partner in his wife, Aleyamma, a degree-holder from the University of Kerala and a trained hand in Homeopathic System of Medicine. They have three children, Sam, Rachel and Isaac.

Bishop K. J. Samuel is a tall, well built, handsome man with a beaming face wreathed in smiles. His goodness and cleverness, charm and efficiency—the qualities he possesses, make him a good leader. He has certainly come a long way from being a simple pastor to the highest office in the diocese. This phenomenal success could be attributed to his total dedication to the Lord's service.

We congratulate Bishop Samuel and wish him a fruitful ministry.

—Editor

MAY 1990

KRISHNA & GODAWARI

The Cyclon in Andhrapradesh Trail of Death and Detraction

The severe cyclone storm hit the Andhra coast on the 9th May at 6.30 p.m. The cyclone with wind speed of 200 to 220 km per hour hit the coast leaving behind a trail of destruction and death. Reports of large-scale destruction are still being received from the coastal districts of Krishna, Guntur, East and West Godawari. A number of villages were completely submerged, and lakhs of people have been rendered homeless. Houses have been flattened, trees uprooted and telecommunication links disrupted as the storm with a tidal width of 100 km touched the coast.

It first started as a breeze around 3 p.m. on Wednesday and intensified into a whipping gale as the eye of the cyclone storm hit the mouth of the river Krishna around 5 p.m. The radar station which recorded 180 kmph velocity of wind got struck and stopped working as the sea water entered the station. The frantic calls from the joint collector and the special officer to radar station were unanswered because of the disruption of communication lines. The two officers along with a multitude of revenue officials went into operation while the gales were still lashing Machilipatnam town. There was hectic activity around 10 p.m. when a sudden thunder boomed and cracked, causing horror.

As hours ticked by panic among the public and officials intensified. The gale and rain continued to lash Machilipatnam town and Vijayawada city, making any attempt on the part of the officials an impossible task. The trees and the poles inside the collectorate were uprooted, blocking the movement of vehicles. Only saving grace was that the telephones in the collectorate were still functioning, enabling the officials to keep in touch with the outside world.

A team of reporters who were caught in the storm at Pamaruru were tossed from one side to the other. The gales which attained speed ranging from 220 to 250 kmph made the movement a Herculean task. As the vehicle tried to cruise amidst such ferocious gales, they were hurled in every direction.

In Vijayawada city, the winds turned violent after midnight and uprooted every weak structure that came their way. Asbestos sheets of houses flew like paper pieces and the glass panes of the buildings were shredded into pieces.

At least a thousand villages were marooned and several lakhs of people affected in the coastal districts, due to torrential rains in the wake of cyclonic storm. Full details about the deaths have not reached but the cyclone toll in the districts moved to 850. The situation in many parts turned grave due to alarming rise in water levels of reservoirs and rivers.

The poultry industry, the primary source of livelihood for hundreds of small and marginal farmers in the coastal districts, reported a damage of more than 50 crores. About 30 lakh birds, innumerable sheds and huge quantities of feed were washed away. Animals in thousands, particularly milch cattle perished in the cyclone.

According to a preliminary assessment made by the Agriculture Department, paddy crops spread over 1.76 lakh hectares worth Rs. 228 crores was lost. Pulses crop spread over 100 hectares valued at Rs. 50 crores was lost. The mango crop was the worst affected with plantations spread over 75,000 hectares worth Rs. 110 crores. The Revenue Department put the loss of property in the cyclone-battered coastal area at about Rs. 1000 crores.

The state administration has geared up its machinery with the assistance of Navy to carry out evacuation and relief operations on a war-footing.

VELLORE DIOCESE

The Southern Area Women's Fellowship

This conference is being arranged once in biennium at the Area level and during this time an opportunity is given to the Women's Fellowship members of each pastorate to come together. Sharing of their Pastorate experiences, election of Office bearers, sharing the stories of witness are some of the main features.

The President Mrs. Ethel Baskeran, the office bearers of the Diocesan Women's Board, Rev. Dass Babu, Editor South India Churchman, Herold, Mrs. Leela Rajanandham, the Central Area Women Worker, Area Chairman and Pastors were the distinguished guests on this occasion. Nearly 150 participants attended the conference. The Area Chairman Rev. Y. Williams gave the welcome address.

The conference was blessed to have a very good Speakers, Mrs. Padma Kanagaraj and Florance Theodore. They gave very inspiring messages in the Forenoon and after noon.

The chair person Dr. Mrs. Ethel Baskeran, President Women's Fellowship of the Diocese inaugurated the conference. Mrs. Sampath read a portion from the Bible. Mrs. Gambeeram, the Women worker of the Southern area offered the opening prayer. Mrs. Parimala Clement the Women's fellowship Secretary of the Diocese along with the Board members Mrs. Glory Selvanathan, Convener Village Women's work and Mrs. Rajam Jayaraj, Convener of the Board taught new songs and chorus 'Hosannah, Hosannah' with actions which the participants enjoyed and learnt them by heart. The first message was given by Mrs. Kanagaraj. Then the delicious Lunch was served.

After the Lunch the participants from Vandavasi Pastorate and Muttathur Pastorate displayed Kummil and Kollattam. The CSI Hospital project communicants from two Villages shared their field experiences.

A folkdance on adult education and a puppet show on how to arrest the disease of diarrhoea were displayed by the Community Health Workers of the CSI Hospital Vandavasi.

Then the elections for the office-bearers of the area took place. The following were elected; Mrs. Sampath, Area Secretary, Mrs. Kasthuri Christopher, Assistant Secretary and Mrs. Prema Manoharsingh, Treasurer.

After the election the second message was given by Mrs. Florence Theodore. Before the message Mrs. Aruldoss gave her witness narrating how she accepted Christ as her saviour. The offeratory was taken after the address. Bishop Amma offered Rs. 300 to the newly elected Treasurer towards endowment fund for the area.

The vote of thanks was given by the local Pastor Rev. Christopher. The candles were lighted by the Board members along with the newly elected office-bearers to enlighten the ministry through the everlasting light of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The hospitality and the services of Mr. Shanker and Dr. (Mrs.) Mary Vijaya Shanker were appreciated by all and were thanked for all their hardships taken to make the conference a grand success. Above all thanks be to God for all His wonderful guidance and mighty deeds.

Finally the meeting came to a close with the Word of prayer and Benediction by Rev. Dass Babu.

The Conference was held at Vandavasi on 31st of March.

MRS. PARIMALA CLEMENT
Women's Fellowship Secretary
CSI Vellore Diocese.

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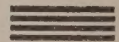
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